

When Religion Wants to Be Worshipped

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon warns against the dangers of religion that seeks worship for itself, emphasizing the need for true worship of God.

Duration: 52:58

Scripture: Jeremiah 5:26-28, Jeremiah 8:10-11, Luke 4:5

Topics: "Religion"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the immediate effect of Satan's fallen nature being embraced by humanity and how it influenced religious practices. The story of Cain and Abel is used as an example, where Abel's offering was accepted by God while Cain's was not. The speaker emphasizes the importance of repentance and surrendering to God, highlighting their own personal journey of resisting God's calling before finally yielding. The sermon also emphasizes the need for truthful preaching, addressing sins such as adultery, stealing, and lying, as the Bible clearly states that these actions are not in line with God's kingdom.

Transcript

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This recording cannot be posted on any website. However, written permission to link to the Times Square Church homepage may be requested by emailing info at [timesquarechurch.org](mailto:info@timesquarechurch.org). Other recordings are available by calling 1-800-488-0854 or by writing to Times Square Church Tape Ministry, 1657 Broadway, New York, New York, 10019. When religion wants to be worshipped, Luke chapter 4 beginning at verse 5. Now this is about the temptation of Jesus Christ by Satan himself.

And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them. For that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it.

If thou therefore will worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan. For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

You see, in this particular verse, what the devil was looking for is worship. And he was looking for worship from God himself. Not content to be whom he was created to be in the heavens.

The scripture says clearly he was corrupted by his own image of himself. And in that corruption, he desired the worship of God. He saw around him, the scripture describes him actually in Ezekiel 28 as the anointed cherub.

He saw around him this worship, and in his heart, he thought, Well, I am equal to God. Although he's not, of course. He desired this worship, and has always desired this worship.

And when he said to Jesus, If you will worship me. He showed him all the kingdoms. He showed him New York City.

He showed him our generation. He showed him all the political powers of the world. All the wealth that this world would be able to scavenge out of the earth as it is.

And he showed it all to him. He showed him the adoration, actually, of fallen men, really. And he said, If you will worship me, it will all be yours.

And it's interesting, because the word in the Greek text means to kiss like a dog licking his master's hand. To fawn or to crouch to someone and pay homage. This is actually the word he spoke.

If you'll bow to me. If you'll be subservient to me. And, of course, this was in the devil's heart right from the beginning.

This is what he wanted God to do. He said it's what he's always been after. After having fallen from grace, he wants even God himself to bend his knee to the image of himself which he has embraced.

And that's really what this was. This was a blatant attempt of Satan to have God bend his knee and say, Satan, I was wrong. Your image of yourself is true.

It's correct. And I bow to you today. Now, that's the ultimate delusion.

That's the ultimate deception. It can't get any darker. I believe that's why Jesus said the words, If the light that be in you be darkness, how great is that darkness.

To look at this created being that God had created with his own hand and he's asking God to bend his knee before him. He had seen the glory of God. He had heard the worship of heaven that you and I only dream about taking in one day.

He had been there and seen it. And all this understanding that was given him had turned to an iniquity within him. And the light that was in him became darkness.

How great is that darkness when any of God's creation want God to begin to bend his knee to their image that they have created of themselves. Ezekiel 28, 17. The Lord says, Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty and you've corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness.

Now, the word wisdom in this text means true intelligence, which leads to reverence for the Lord. The skeptic, the commentation says, will never find it and therefore will never know the true meaning of life. He says to Satan himself, You've corrupted your wisdom because of your image of yourself.

You could have had a knowledge and that knowledge of God would have led you to a reverence for God, but it became corrupted. Ezekiel 28, 18. He says, You've defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities.

And the word sanctuaries means places intended for refuge and worship. In other words, Satan, where you are, the sanctuaries where people gather are defiled. And they're defiled by the multitude of your depraved actions and perversions of meaning.

You are there, you manifest among the people, but you defile, God said, every place you touch, you defile it. Because you are full of depravity and you cannot speak truth. All you can do is pervert the meanings of truth.

Not content to lead rebellion in heaven, Satan brought his treachery to the earth. Now, he knew that Adam and his descendants were the very apple of God's eye, as you are today. We are the closest thing in this world to the heart of God.

He loves you passionately, that's why he became a man and died for you, wanting you back to himself again. Now, Satan knew this. Satan knew that Adam and his descendants, which are you and I, were the apple of God's eye.

We were created by God, we were created for God, to live in his love and to worship him forever. Now, Satan knew this. If Adam remained untouched, there would be multiple billions of people that would gather around the throne in agreement with the angels and created beings in heaven, and would worship and praise the one, only, and true God forever and ever.

You see, this is something that he wanted for himself. And the only way he could steal this worship from God and secure it for himself was to get a man, or get Adam, to agree with his point of view. And what is Satan's point of view? That there are ways that are higher than God's ways.

That's Satan's point of view. God doesn't know everything. His word is not the last word.

There is knowledge that God is withholding from us. In Genesis 3-4, he comes to Eve. Eve knew what God had spoken.

And Satan comes to Eve and says, no, you will not surely die. Verse 5, he says, God knows in the day you eat of this thing that God has forbidden, your eyes will be opened. And you'll be as God's.

Of course, that was Satan's desire, to be as God himself. And you will know good and evil, which in reality is the corrupted wisdom of Satan. You will have these open-eyed areas.

In disobedience, he's promising people this open vision of heaven. He's promising them knowledge that only God can give. And he says the weight of this knowledge is don't take God seriously.

You don't have to come under the confines of his authority. I know he says, forgive those that have wronged you, but you don't really have to do that. You see, there's another way to do this.

And God just wants you to be blindly obedient. But I know a better way to do this. And if you'll follow my logic and reasoning, your eyes will be opened and you will become God.

You see, that was what he was after right in the beginning. In one act of disobedience, when Adam and Eve partook of what God had forbidden them, this nature of Satan, this rebellious, corrupted wisdom, was sown into man and all of his descendants. It was sown into you.

It was sown into me. That's why the Bible says we are born with a fallen nature. The Scripture calls it a sin nature, or for lack of another term, it's also called the flesh.

We were born with a fallen nature. In one act of disobedience, this DNA, as it is, of Satan's corrupted way of thinking was sown into the human race. All that, one day, we would be captivated by him for all of eternity.

Now, let's look at the immediate effect that this had on religious practice. If you go to Genesis chapter 4, please, with me, right in the beginning of your Bible, you're going to immediately begin to see the fruit of this fallen nature of Satan himself, now being embraced by God's creation, man, and how it got into religion almost immediately. Genesis chapter 4, in verse 3, And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.

And Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering. But unto Cain and his offering he had not respect.

Now, there are two brothers. They're both bringing a sacrifice of offering to God, but one is accepted by God. The inference, I think, is clear that one man had a clean and a pure heart in bringing this, and the other one didn't.

And Cain, it says, was very wroth, and his countenance was fell. You see, this is a manifestation of Satan, really. You picture Satan before the throne, and all this praise is going to God, and not to him.

And he becomes angry about it, and his countenance falls. And the Lord said to Cain, why are you wroth or angry? And why has your countenance fallen? In verse 7, he says, If you do well, shall you not be accepted? And if you don't do well, sin lies at the door. Now, he's reproving him.

The voice of God is coming to Cain and saying to Cain, Your sacrifice is not as pure as you think it is. There's a problem with your sacrifice. Now, that's what God does today.

That's what he's doing in this service. Some today have come in, and you're lifting your hands to God, but your sacrifice may not be as clean as you think it is. You're bringing this sacrifice of praise.

But there may be something in your life that God is trying to put his finger on. You're refusing to hear the voice of God. So, therefore, the Lord comes, and there's a sense that my songs are just bouncing off the ceiling.

Why is the person beside me so captivated by God's presence? And I'm fighting so hard to get through. And the Lord comes to Cain. He says, If you do well, verse 7, will you not be accepted? And if you do not well, sin lies at the door.

And then he gives him a promise. He says, Unto thee shall be his desire. In other words, sin, Satan, will desire to rule over you, but thou shalt rule over him.

And so this man has a promise just like you and I do today. But what does he do with the promise? Cain talked with Abel his brother, and it came to pass that they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel

his brother and slew him. And here is the very root of religion that wants to be worshipped.

This man wants God to bend his knee to his sacrifice. And because God refuses to bend his knee to his sacrifice, he now moves to kill the man through whom the sacrifice to God is accepted. He is now moving to destroy everything that looks like God exactly as Satan has done.

He has that spirit of Satan really upon him. If you don't believe this, in John chapter 8, let me just read it to you. Verses 43 and 44.

Jesus Christ is speaking to a religious crowd who claim to be children of Abraham. He's telling them, You're going to try to kill me. They're telling him, You've got a devil.

In John 8, verse 43, he says, Why do you not understand my speech? Even because you cannot hear my word. Now, he's standing, and these are Pharisees. These are religious leaders.

These are supposed to be the people of God. Now, before them is the purest manifestation of God's life that the world has ever known. Now, they have a choice.

They either bend their knee to God, or they require God to bend his knee to them. I'm trying to prove a point here. You see, the very heart of Satan finds his refuge in religion that is outside of the life of God and demands that it shall be worshipped.

Jesus looks at them in verse 44, and he says, You are of your father the devil. Now, he's talking to Pharisees and Sadducees and lawyers, Levites. He says, You're of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.

He was a murderer from the beginning. He was a murderer, and he was saying to them, You're going to lift me up. You're going to crucify me.

And shortly after, they said to him, You say you're not even 50 years old, and you say you've seen Abraham. And he said, Surely I tell you, before Abraham was, I am. And at that moment, they took up stones to kill him.

There was a choice the people had to make. You either bend your knee to God, or try to make God bend his knee to you. Satan has a ministry.

Folks, Satan has a ministry today. And this ministry masquerades as the voice of God. But the voice of God comes with all of its perversions, all of its twistings and distortions of truth, masquerading as God's voice.

Paul says it this way in 2 Corinthians 11, verses 13 to 15. I will read it to you. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

And no marvel! For Satan himself is transformed into an angel, or that means a messenger of light. Therefore it's no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness. Paul warned the church.

There are false apostles. There are false preachers. There are false teachers.

They themselves will not bend their knee to God. They stand in pulpits. And Peter says in 2 Peter 2, 18 and 19, they speak great swelling words of vanity.

Actually, the word vanity in the Greek text means worthlessness. They allure or draw through the lust of the flesh, through much wantonness. And the word wantonness means the readiness for all pleasure, acknowledging no restraints.

They promise freedom, but they are servants of their own corruption. And that means they are full of inward decay and ruin. May I paraphrase this for you? Peter says these types of people are going to make it into pulpits, especially in the last days.

They speak great swelling worthless words. They allure people through the lust of their flesh. And they lead them to all pleasure, which acknowledges no restraints.

They promise freedom. They speak a lot about freedom. But they themselves are slaves of their own inward decay and ruin.

Now folks, I've often wondered. It's been a perplexing thing to me over the years. How do so many people, especially in our generation, in houses of religion, how do they become so deceived that they will actually give much and sometimes all of their resources to spiritual charlatans, frauds, and thieves? The airways are full of them today.

Pulpits are full of them. They are charlatans, they are frauds, and they are thieves. How is it that so many people are giving their strength and everything they have to these men? You see, the answer is found in our opening text today.

Satan said to Jesus, if you will worship me, everything will be yours. If you will worship me. I'm willing to give it up.

If you will declare me in my present condition to be godly. Oh, folks, you've got to hear me on this. There are people sitting in houses and that spirit is in them.

It's the spirit of religion that wants to be worshipped. And they sit before preachers and they say, preacher, I'll give you everything I've got. I'll give you all my bank account.

I'll give you my resources. I'll give you my strength. If you will just bend your knee to my religion and declare me to be godly, it will all be yours.

Jeremiah had them in his day. Jeremiah spoke about these particular types of preachers. Jeremiah chapter 5. Let me read it to you for time's sake.

For among my people are found wicked men. Verses 26 to 28. They lay wait as he that set snares.

They set a trap. They catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit.

Therefore, they become great and they become rich. They're waxen fat. They shine.

Oh, they stand out as God's great men and women of the hour. They'll do everything they can to shine and have persons' admirations. Yet, it says, they overpass the deeds of the wicked.

They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper. And the right of the needy do they not judge. Oh, preacher, tell me I'm godly.

Don't talk to me about my sin. Don't call me an adulterer. Don't call me a liar.

Don't call me a thief. Don't call me immoral. Don't tell me I'm prayerless.

Don't tell me that my ambitions may not be in line with God's will for my life. Tell me I'm godly and you will have it all. I'll give it all to you if you'll just tell me I'm godly.

Jeremiah chapter 8, verses 10 to 11 tells us, therefore, he says, actually that's not the right verse. He says, for they have healed from the greatest, from the least even to the greatest, they're given to covetousness. From the prophet even unto the priest, everyone deals falsely.

For they've healed the herd of my people, of the daughter of my people, slightly saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace. Preacher, tell me everything is well. Preacher, tell me I'm going to heaven.

Preacher, tell me I've got a great future ahead of me. Oh, preacher, tell me what I want to hear about myself. Confirm the image of myself that I have created all around myself.

And you have everything. You'll have it all if you'll just bend your knee to me. If you'll tell me of some destiny of greatness and power that awaits me over men's lives.

Deuteronomy 29.19 says, it shall come to pass that when he hears the words of this curse, that he blesses himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart. We're living in a generation of people who are gravitating to preachers. And they're saying, oh, tell me I'll have peace even though I'm charting my own course.

I'm living my own way. I'm creating my own standards of right and wrong. I'm determining what is acceptable to God and what is not acceptable.

Tell me I'll have peace, preacher, and it will all be yours. And he goes on to say, to add drunkenness to thirst. Not only do these people have a thirst that's not satisfied, but now they're intoxicated with a false peace.

Preacher, if you bow down to my desires and tell me that giving will only increase my personal wealth and position, it will all be yours. If you'll worship me and if you'll let me be God, if you'll let me be my own God, and if you'll worship me, it will all be yours. Declare me to be equal with God.

Tell me I'm able to chart my own course without consequence. By God's grace, you'll never hear that kind of foolishness in this house. But there are many places where you will hear it.

And you're warned today. You choose to sit under this kind of thing. You're sitting under the ministry of Satan himself.

Misguided, crooked, corrupted view of God and God's people and God's humanity. Thou hast corrupted thy wisdom, the Lord said in Ezekiel 28, 17. You have corrupted your wisdom.

You have twisted and perverted truth. Now, in contrast to this, go with me to Matthew chapter 2, please. Considering the season that we're living in right now, there's a great, great contrast to all of this religion

that wants to be worshipped.

Matthew chapter 2, verse 11. This is, of course, speaking about the birth of Jesus. These are wise men.

And in verse 11, it says, And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother. And they fell down and worshipped him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

And the interesting thing is, when worship is true worship, the voice of God is immediately heard. You don't need anybody to tell you what God is saying. In the very next verse, it says, You see, wisdom is found in the true worship of God.

There's no other way. Satan's wisdom is corrupted. And those who sit under this type of ministry sit under a corrupted wisdom.

It portrays itself as light, but it is, in fact, a very deep darkness. And if it gets a hold of the person, it causes them to be angry when they are standing in the actual presence of the voice of God. And they say, God, if you will not bend your knee to me, then I will not bend my knee to you.

I'm out of here. I didn't come here for this kind of preaching. I came here for somebody to tell me that I'm going to be rich and famous and prosperous and everything is going to be well.

Well, folks, if I do that and send you to hell, what good am I doing for your soul? If you're living in adultery, I better tell you you're living in adultery. If you're stealing at work, I better tell you you're stealing. Because the Bible says no thief inherits the kingdom of God.

If you're a liar, I better call you a liar if I'm speaking for God. Because the Scripture says whatever makes a lie in Revelation dwells outside of the city of God. I better tell you, I better stand here with the Spirit of God upon me.

I better speak for God and challenge everything in you and I that is causing this sacrifice that we suppose is acceptable to God to be not acceptable to Him. Wisdom is found in true worship of God. These men laid down their treasures at His feet.

These were kings. They didn't have to come here. But they laid down their treasures at His feet with no thought of personal advantage.

They were content that somehow their gifts would further the objectives of God through this child for humanity. What could they hope? Here's this rag-tag band of Mary and her... couldn't even hardly afford clothing for their child. He was in swaddling clothes, which is a poor person's clothes.

Here they are in a stable, not in a palace. And these kings come in and they lay down their gifts. There is no hope of any return from this.

But wisdom is justified, Jesus said of her children. These men were content at seeking His likeness and fell down and worshipped Him. I am content, God, if You chose to manifest Yourself in a way I don't understand.

And in a way that may not further any personal objective I have in my life. I don't care. I bring what I have to You and I lay it at Your feet and I am content to worship You in Your likeness.

Now, in one sense, this scene represents a reawakening of wisdom. It's a return to the knowledge that God's ways are higher than our ways. See, when Satan fell, he inverted that knowledge.

I have ways that are higher than God's. He came down into the garden, he inverted that knowledge. And said, no, there are ways that are higher than God's and so does sin nature in man.

That very nature of his own heart. And now we see what these wise men at Christmas time, as we've come to know it, I see a reawakening of wisdom. A coming in and a giving to something that doesn't make sense to the natural mind.

There is no hope of personal advantage. But God, You know what You're doing. And Your ways are higher than our ways.

Satan comes in the fullness of pride, self-exaltation and rebellion. But Christ comes in the fullness of humility, self-abasement and obedience. The only way God can show us the way out of this religious dilemma is to come as a man and show us the path that we need to walk.

Let this mind be in You. The Scripture says it was also in Christ Jesus. Being in the form of God taught it not robbery to be equal with God.

Now it was robbery for Satan to even think he could be equal with God. But Christ was equal with God. And it was not robbery to declare himself equal with God.

But He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He came to show the way out of this dilemma. Follow Me as I'm following My Father, He tells us today.

You follow Me. Now go with me to Psalm 17, please. It's a prayer of David.

Now David was a king after God's heart. It's been the cry of my heart. And I know it's the cry of many in this church that in our generation that we could live as David did to see the worship of God in truth brought back into the center of where God dwells.

Now remember under David the ark was brought into Jerusalem with great rejoicing and great dancing and great celebration. I'd live to see Christ worshiped again. I'd live to hear the voices in this house of young people in this city who have been raised and told there is no God, lifting their voices to God and surrendering to Him as Lord and Savior.

I'd live for the day when New York City has a visitation of God's Spirit again and God in His mercy begins to sweep away the refuge of lies where men have thought they have found peace and bring them to that which truly enables men to live an abundant life and a secure life here on this earth. In Psalm 17, verse 8, David prays this prayer. Keep me as the apple of your eye.

Hide me under the shadow of your wings. From the wicked that oppress me and from my deadly enemies who compass me about. They're enclosed in their own fat.

With their mouth they speak proudly. They have now compassed us in our steps. They have set their eyes bowing down to the earth like as a lion that is greedy of his prey and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.

Arise, O Lord, disappoint Him. Cast Him down. Deliver my soul from the wicked which is Thy sword.

Which is David saying, God, this is what You do. I am surrounded by wickedness. They want to take from my heart this passionate desire that I have to see Your name honored.

David had had this passionate desire from the time he was a child. He was the one who went in and fought the giants when nobody could fight anymore. From men, he says in verse 14, which are Thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world.

This is what David is being asked for deliverance from. From men of the world which have their portion in this life. Whose belly is filled with hid treasure.

They're full of children and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. David is saying they appear to be prospering. But it's all of the world.

They don't have this inner knowledge of God. They don't have the true wisdom of God. They don't have anything that can lead the people back to true worship.

Jesus Christ, they have nothing that can cause your heart to be satisfied. All they do is stand and imbibe a perverted wisdom on this generation. A light that pretends to be light, but in reality it is deep, deep and utter darkness.

David says, God, deliver me. And that should be the cry of every person in this house. God, deliver me.

Don't let me be like Cain in my service to You. Don't let me ever stand hard-hearted in Your house. Jesus Christ, help me.

Help me to have an open heart. This is about eternity. This is about heaven.

Jesus, this is about the honor of Your name in the earth before You come and take Your church home to Yourself. If ever we should be crying this out, it's now in this generation. God, deliver my poor heart from anything in me that wants You, Jesus, to bend Your knee to my image of myself.

Deliver me and give me the power to bend my knee to You. And David says in verse 15, And as for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness, and I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness. God Almighty, I will be satisfied with how You choose to reveal Yourself to me.

I don't have to ask all the questions, and I don't need to know all the answers. I just know in my heart that You are God, and there is no other God besides You. You are Lord and King.

You have the plans to my life. No one else holds the plans to my life, whether sorrow or in pain, whether in sickness or in health, whether in prosperity or whether in poverty. I will serve You.

I will trust You with all of my days, and my lips will glorify Your name. David's saying, I'll be satisfied to take the lowest seat in the house, while everyone else is clamoring for power and prestige and position and phylacteries and robes and titles. I will be satisfied to take the lowest seat in the house, because Jesus, that's where You are.

That's where You dwell. That's where You live. Let them fight for the admiration of men.

Let them fight for a religion that bends its knee to their image of themselves. I will take the lowest seat in the house. I will be satisfied to know that Your ways are higher than my ways.

I don't have to understand it all. I just simply have to walk through the midst of it, trusting You and praising You. I will be satisfied to know that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

I will be satisfied to understand that the deepest meaning of life comes into focus when I take a towel, as You did, and choose to serve others. This is the deepest meaning of my life, not to rule and reign over man, not to be esteemed to be someone great, but to take off my robe, put on a towel, and wash the feet of God's house. I will be satisfied to walk in repentance.

That means that I will agree quickly with You when something in my life offends Your truth. I will be satisfied. I will never ask You, God, to bend Your knee to a corrupted image of myself that I have embraced.

I will be satisfied. God, You have my heart. You can speak to me.

You overthrow every table of doves. You push back every stone. You expose everything that displeases Your name.

My heart is open to You, God. I bend my knee to You. I bend my knee to You.

I will be satisfied to give what You give me, asking nothing in return, knowing that everything You have promised will sustain me. You will keep me, God. I don't have to keep myself.

You will keep me. I will take to You everything You give to me, like Hannah took Samuel to You. Even if it's the most precious thing to my heart, I will give it to You, God, for Your use.

And You have promised to be my God and to sustain me all the days of my life. I will be satisfied to be engaged with Your work, which is reclaiming the lost. This is the work of God.

I will be satisfied to be a testimony of Your love and Your grace. I will speak of Calvary. I will speak of the cross.

I will speak of suffering. I will speak of sin. I will speak of Your blood.

I will not be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I will be satisfied to let Your life be my enabling power within to do Your work. Hallelujah.

Oh, God. I will be satisfied to let Your life be my enabling power to do the work of God. I'll be satisfied with You, Lord Jesus.

And You only will I serve. Get Thee behind me, Satan. For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt Thou serve.

Get Thee behind me. Get Thee behind me with all your theology. Get Thee behind me with your perversions of truth and wisdom.

It's time for the church of Jesus Christ to stand up and say, Get Thee behind me. You savor not the things that be of God, but the things that be of man. Get Thee behind me, Satan.

I will not bend my knee to you. I will only bend my knee to God. I will not ask God to bow down to me ever.

Today, I freely bow down to Him. But this is the word the Lord's given me for our future. It's for the future of this church.

It's for my own future. Where the Lord says, Take off your shoes. Take off your plans.

Take off your schemes. Take off your strategies. Take off all your falseness.

Walk in truth. Obey me. And there'll be a shout.

There'll be a time to shout. But you'll know when. I'll tell you.

It'll come into your heart. You'll know when the victory is won. We're living in a season of incredible religious deception.

Satan has come down to the earth and his time is short. He has great wrath against the worship of God, the true worship of God. He comes to pervert truth, to refocus the church of Jesus Christ just as he did in the Garden of Eden.

God be merciful to those who sit under his ministry. I preach this word today as a plea to many in our generation who need to reconsider whether they are worshipers of God or they're asking God to worship their religion. Today, I want to give an altar call for those who need to bend their knee to God.

I believe that this has been the hallmark of this church. And by God's grace, it will continue to be. We will never attempt in this house to conform God to our image.

But we will be conformed by the power of God and the spirit of God and the word of God to the image of Christ. There are people here today in this age where you need to bend your knee in repentance. You cannot and you must not attempt to bend God to your view.

I'm so tired of hearing the stories of adulterers who read their Bibles to each other after fornicating. We'll talk about spiritual delusion. People who think you can lie and gossip and slander and somehow that God doesn't mean what he says.

And there's no penalty for these things. Or there's a great penalty. Read it in the scriptures.

Says in Psalm 50, how dare you take my covenant in your mouth when you sit and slander your own brother? You cannot bend God to your view. I can't bend him to my view. And only a fool would try.

Only somebody who has Satan's heart would try to bend God to his view. There are people today who need to bend their knee to God and surrender. It's some area of your life where he's asking you for what you don't want to give.

I had a young lady one time. I've shared this before, but it was on Broadway here. And she got gloriously saved, gloriously converted in this church.

And was in the front rows. And you couldn't help but notice this living, vivacious worship she had. And one day she met me behind the platform after service.

And she said, it can't be. It can't be, Pastor. It can't be.

It can't be that God is asking me to give up this career. I've lived my whole life for it. Now, nobody ever said that to her.

We don't tell people what to do in this church. We tell the people to seek God. Let God speak to your heart.

I said to her, well, and she's looking for me to bend my knee. And say to her, no, God would never ask you to give up. She would be so relieved.

And I said, no, if God's telling you to do something, you should obey him. And she kept coming back to see me. And then eventually just drifted to the back of the church.

And then I met her one day on the street, and she hid from me. Trying to pretend she didn't know who I was. And it was only shortly after coming to me, she said, oh, the Lord has told me that this is what I'm to do for my life.

But there was such a hollowness in her now. You see, what she was doing is saying, God, bend your knee to me. I have an image of myself, and you are going to bend your knee to me.

You see, people who will not surrender to God end up prey to these false ministers that Paul spoke about. Who will sit there and say, yes, you're godly in your present condition. Whether or not you're living for God, you're godly.

And you will have peace, even though you walk in the imagination of your heart. People who will not surrender to God end up under this ministry of delusion. There are those who need to bend their knee to God in renewed commitment.

As the wise men did, if there's wisdom in us in our generation, we will bend our knee to Christ. And say, God, I will finish this journey among the wise. Let the fools be fools.

Let the filthy be filthy still. But I make a choice in my heart, I'm going to finish this journey among the wise. I'm going to bend my knee to the Christ of God and to nothing else.

I make a renewed commitment today to bend my knee to God all the days of my life. Now, this does not bring you under condemnation. It does not move you into some kind of compulsion to have to go out the door and quit your job.

But it brings you into a place where you say, Lord, my life is yours. My heart is yours. My mind is yours.

Everything that I have is yours. Lord, speak to my heart, guide me, lead me. And the scripture tells us that the ways of God are peace.

He's the prince of peace. He may ask you to make a difficult decision, but there'll be such peace in your heart. The turmoil will be gone.

You'll have the ability to say, yes, Lord, I'll let that relationship go. I'll move in this area. I'll give this.

I'll do that. I will surrender this ambition. I'll surrender this sin.

I'll repent. And once you begin to do that, his life begins to flow. There's such an abiding of God.

Remember Saul. He said to Samuel, when the kingdom was slipping from his grasp, he grabs the hem of Samuel's garment and tears it. And he says, come and worship God with me, your God, so that I might be honored among the people.

What a contrast to David, who jumps into the valley and says, I come to you in the name of the God of Israel, whose name and armies you have defied. What a contrast when you find a man or woman that says, my life is not to be honored myself, but to honor God. And whether I be counted a fool in a generation that in its wisdom is heading for hell, so be it.

I will stand for God. I will bend my knee to him. I will give my all to him.

I'm giving an altar call to this entire church. We're heading into very perilous days. There's only one testimony that's going to survive.

The prosperity preachers are going to be wiped out in a moment of time. And everybody who sits under their ministry is going to be left in a tailspin, saying, we thought this is what God was. Where did God go? And if this isn't God, who is God? Oh, folks, bend your knee.

Bend it today. Be wise. Be wise today.

I appeal to you. Be wise. Bend your knee to God.

If the Holy Spirit is speaking to you, it has to be the Holy Spirit. God is putting his finger on something in your life. Would you, as we stand momentarily, get out of your seat, come to this altar, and we're going to pray together as a church.

Let our knees be bent to God all the days of our lives. In the annex, you can stand and go between the screens. In the main sanctuary, as we stand, please slip out.

Balcony, you can go to either aisle. Let's all stand together. Please make your way.

And we're going to pray together. Move in closely. Please make room for those that are coming.

Oh, Jesus, thank you. Just make room for those who need to repent. To repent.

You're in sin. You've got to repent. Come.

Be wise. Bend your knee. Be wise.

You cannot conform God to your image. You cannot pervert truth. Turn from your sin.

Surrender your life to him. It's not like it's all going to be done in a moment. I fought for six months before I yielded to preach the gospel as a pastor.

I fought against it. I didn't want to do it. I was quite happy in my career.

But there was this constant leading and wooing in me. Finally, the Lord was able to get me to surrender and give my life to him. And I've never regretted it.

And every day, every day I've got to bend my knee to God. In interactions that I have to go through as a pastor, as a husband, as a father, as a friend. And renew my commitment to finish this journey among the

wise.

Never to embrace wrong ideas about God or people. Never to hold things that God says you must let go. Never to be what God says you mustn't be.

I need daily to bend my knee to God. Hallelujah. Pray with me this morning, please.

Lord Jesus Christ. You are God. There is no other God.

Your ways are right. And your ways are true. And they are higher than my ways.

To bend my knee to your lordship. And the rightful ownership that you have over everything that I am. Help me to bring to you a sacrifice of praise that is born in spirit and in truth.

For these are the people that you seek to worship you. Help me to surrender all of the things that you ask me to give. Help me not to withhold.

Creating justification and excuses for rebellion and disobedience. Help me every day to bend my knee. To renew my commitment to following you in truth.

That I might finish this journey among those who are truly wise. Now Lord I entrust my soul into your hands. You who are able to keep everything that is entrusted to you.

I ask you God to keep me. Protect me from evil. Let it not prosper against me.

Grant to me a tender heart. A heart of love for truth. A heart of love for God.

A heart of love for people. Live your life Jesus. In and through mine.

And be glorified in me. And be glorified through me. I ask this with a believing heart.

In Jesus name. Now let me pray please. Father I pray for this church.

Oh God. Lord I know that this is a holy moment with you. I pray God.

Help us. Help us to honor you. This is such a crooked time.

The airways are filled with perversion. Oh God. You said you will keep us in perfect peace whose minds are stayed on you.

Keep our minds on you Lord. Not on the things of this world. Oh God let your desires become our desires.

You said that if we delight ourselves in you that you will give us. You'll give us new desires in our hearts and then you'll fulfill them. Oh God.

Oh God. Oh God. Oh God.

Oh Jesus. Help us to love people. My God help us to see people as you see them.

Give us what was in your heart that caused you to go to a cross. My God help us. To walk a path of wisdom.

I pray for mercy on those who profess your name but are captivated under theologies of darkness. My God set them free. Set them free.

I stand before every power of hell as Moses stood before Pharaoh. And we claim as a church that we have authority. And Satan you must let them go that they may serve God.

You must let them go. We stand against you. God almighty said we have power to tread upon you.

We have power to cast down your imaginations that you plant in men's minds. And to bring every thought into the captivity of the obedience of truth. Therefore we stand against you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we say to you the Lord rebuke you. The Lord rebuke you. God thank you.

You're going to give authority and renewed vision to your church. You're going to give us power not to walk by what we see but by what we know to be truth. God you're going to give us mercy and compassion and authority.

God to see the powers of hell torn down. And to see men and women and children released into the glorious freedom and salvation of Jesus Christ. Father I thank you God for this with all of my heart.

Hallelujah. Now take a moment just to praise him. Take a moment just to thank him.

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